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JANUARY 2017

I am extremely honored to write my first “Editorial Notes” for *Family Court Review*, and I am most grateful to the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) Board of Directors for appointing me to succeed Professor Andrew Schepard. I have been a devoted reader of and contributor to *FCR* (and its predecessor journals) for many decades, and I have been a committed AFCC member since the early 1990s. Although I doubt anyone can fill Professor Schepard’s shoes, I certainly plan to try my best to follow in his incredibly large footsteps. He is a dear friend and colleague with whom I regularly have consulted and collaborated since my early days in law school teaching, and I am most appreciative of his unwavering support.

It is with a heavy heart, however, that I must mention the untimely passing of Ruth Stern. Ruth and her husband, Professor Herbie DiFonzo, along with Dr. Robert Emery, oversaw and maintained the operation of *FCR* at Hofstra during the transition year prior to my appointment. Ruth served as Managing Editor of *FCR* during her tenure with the journal. I met Ruth last March at an editorial meeting at Hofstra, and we communicated throughout the latter part of the transition process. It was obvious from the interactions at the editorial meeting that Ruth had developed close working relationships with the law student staff, who displayed their respect and affection for her. Likewise, in the short time I had the privilege to work with Ruth, she welcomed me to *FCR* with warmth, humility, encouragement, and support. I have known Herbie for quite some time, and, on behalf of *FCR*, I extend to him our deepest sympathies. Bob Emery’s October 2016 Editorial Notes provide more information about Ruth and a description of his working relationship with her. In addition, Herbie’s fitting tribute to his wife is forthcoming in the April 2017 issue of *FCR*.

Since officially assuming the editorial reins in April 2016, I have been privileged to collaborate with two outstanding co-editors: Robert Emery, the *FCR* social science editor, and Matthew Kiernan, the *FCR* faculty administrative editor. Along with the very capable Hofstra law student staff, our work together has been efficient, effective, and enjoyable. While *FCR* readers undoubtedly know Bob, who has served as the *FCR* social science editor since 2010 and is one of the leading researchers on child custody, Matt is new to the production process. He joins *FCR* as the on-site law student staff advisor and administrator. He also serves as the director of policy and planning in the law school’s Center for Children, Families, and the Law. Prior to this position, Matt served as special counsel to the Honorable Gail Prudenti in her role as chief administrative judge of the New York Court System and as clerk of the court of the Appellate Division for the Second Judicial Department. Indeed, it truly is an honor for me to work with Bob, Matt, and the Hofstra law student staff. In addition, Eric Piper and his colleagues from Wiley have provided great technical support to the *FCR* production team, including efforts to enhance the worldwide readership of the journal. All of us truly have enjoyed working closely with Eric, who is always on the lookout for processes to benefit and enhance *FCR*’s audience. Finally, AFCC Executive Director Peter Salem has provided me with incredible support and assistance at every step of the transition process. Like Andy, Peter is also a long-standing dear friend and colleague.

For those *FCR* readers who do not know me, please allow me to offer a bit of background. I am a tenured member of the University of Baltimore School of Law faculty, where I have taught various family law courses since 1989. I founded and direct the law school’s Sayra and Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families, Children and the Courts, an interdisciplinary center aimed at improving the family justice system. I bring to the editor-in-chief position assets related to my career as a practicing family

law attorney, an educator, a scholar, a social science researcher, and a change agent. I have served on the editorial board of *FCR* for many years, and, in my opinion, it is the most useful journal in the family law field. My particular scholarly interests are interdisciplinary, including therapeutic jurisprudence, the ecology of human development, unified family courts, and family justice system reform. I am extremely grateful to the Dean of the University of Baltimore School of Law, Ronald Weich, for his incredible support at every step in the process of my assuming the role of Editor in Chief.

I believe very strongly in AFCC's mission, which I plan to support by bringing timely and even controversial topics to the attention of *FCR*'s readership from both an interdisciplinary and, where appropriate, international perspective. *FCR* has many strengths upon which I intend to build. The interdisciplinary focus is critical both to maintain and to promote, and the perspectives of the international family law community are essential in today's world. I plan to preserve and to enhance these aspects by reaching out to my colleagues in academia and to the professional community through various listservs and by encouraging members of the editorial board to do the same. I also plan to reach out to the state AFCC chapters to encourage their participation in *FCR*. After convening my first editorial board meeting at the AFCC Annual Conference in Seattle and together with my co-editors, we have restructured the editorial board, strengthened the peer review process, revived the law student writing competition, and enlisted the assistance of several guest editors for various Special Issues, including the following topics: self-represented litigants, international demographics of joint custody, children's human rights, dimensions of parental conflict and effects on children, same-sex relationships, 7th World Congress on Family Law and Children's Rights, and the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of Child Abduction. In addition, we have decided on occasion to publish articles longer than twenty-five pages in an effort to encourage submissions from a larger pool of family law professionals.

FCR authors today can reach more readers and can have even more impact in the family law arena than in prior years. According to Wiley, the journal is available electronically in more than 4,000 institutions worldwide and in another 4,757 institutions in the developing world at free or low-cost access. Articles from *FCR* are downloaded more than 100,000 times each year, and roughly half of those are from readers outside the United States. I plan to share more information about publishing updates and innovations in future issues, but, suffice it to say, *FCR* is a very influential publication.

I am honored to introduce the guest editor of this Special Issue on "The Family Law Bar as Leaders of Change: The IAALS Summit." Natalie Knowlton is a Special Projects Consultant at the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System (IAALS) at the University of Denver. Until April 2016, Natalie served as the director of IAALS' Honoring Families Initiative (HFI), an undertaking that provides national outreach and advocacy to facilitate the improvement of divorce and custody processes. She received her J.D. from the University of Denver Sturm College of Law and an M.A. in international studies from the Josef Korbel School of International Studies. Along with Peter Salem, Andy Schepard, AFCC President Marsha Kline Pruett, and several current and past members of the AFCC board of directors, I have served on the advisory board of HFI for several years. I also served on the Summit Steering Committee and attended the Summit. Thus, it is a particular pleasure for me to introduce Natalie and this Special Issue. I have worked closely with Natalie and her IAALS colleagues, and I am an admirer and supporter of their outstanding work and their many valuable contributions. Natalie's Special Issue introduction provides an overview of each of the articles included in the Special Issue.

This issue of *FCR* also includes two law student Notes. Mishal Pahrand, managing editor of the *FCR* law student staff and someone with whom I have had the great fortune to interact on a regular basis, writes about the need for reform of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. Mishal argues that Congress must enact a statute containing stricter controls for parents who wish to travel with their children outside the United States. She recounts the context for an increasing number of child abductions and the limitations of the Hague Convention.

The second student Note, by Nicole Vota, discusses free-range parenting, or the notion that less control of children by parents is more beneficial to the child by encouraging independence. Nicole

addresses the impact of criminalizing of such parental conduct and argues for the creation of a model free-range parenting statute to provide protection to parents.

As we bid farewell to Andy Schepard and celebrate him for his eighteen years of unwavering and excellent leadership of *FCR*, I thank you for welcoming me into this new role. I pledge to do everything I can to maintain and enhance the value of this outstanding and vital publication.

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